

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously presented) A video signal process comprising the steps of: in a compression coding step, analyzing an input video signal at a picture rate and at a macroblock rate and taking compression coding decisions including picture rate coding decisions and macroblock rate coding decisions; forming a representation of the coding decisions; outputting said representation from the compression coding step and passing the representation along a video pathway with the input video signal; and downstream of the video pathway, compression encoding the input video signal in accordance with said coding decisions.
2. (Original) A process according to Claim 1 wherein said representation of the coding decision comprises an information bus in which the coding decisions are represented in the same format as they are represented in the compressed bitstream which is the output of said downstream compression coding operation.
3. (Original) A process according to Claim 1 or Claim 2, wherein said analysis generates information relating to picture size and type.
4. (Original) A process according to any one of the preceding claims, wherein said analysis comprises the generation of candidate motion vectors.
5. (Original) A process according to Claim 4, wherein said analysis comprises the selection for each macroblock of the picture of a motion vector from said candidate motion vectors.
6. (Original) A process according to Claim 5, in which said analysis comprises the selection of a macroblock prediction mode.
7. (Previously presented) A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein said analysis includes a bit rate control and the taking of quantizer decisions appropriate to maintenance of a selected bit rate.

8. (Previously presented) A process according to Claim 5 wherein plural bit rates are selected and plural quantizer decisions are taken.

9. (Currently amended) Compression pre-processing apparatus, comprising coding means for analysing ~~a~~an input video signal at a picture rate and at a macroblock rate and taking compression coding decisions including picture rate coding decisions and macroblock rate coding decisions; means for processing the coding decisions and means for outputting, from the compression pre-processing apparatus, the processed coding decisions for passage with the input video signal along a video pathway.

10. (Previously presented) Apparatus according to Claim 9, wherein said means for processing the coding decisions provides a representation of the coding decisions in the form of a compressed video bit stream lacking transform coefficients.

11. (Original) Apparatus according to Claim 9, wherein said means for outputting the processed coding decisions serves to modulate one or more least significant bits of the video signal.

12. (New) A process according to Claim 1, wherein the input video signal which is passed along the video pathway with the representation of the coding decisions undergoes no processing other than delay.

13. (New) Apparatus according to Claim 9, wherein the means for outputting the processed coding decisions comprises means for modifying the un-encoded input video signal by adding the processed coding decisions.

14. (New) A video signal process comprising the steps of: in a compression coding step, analyzing an input video signal and taking compression coding decisions including quantizer decisions; forming a representation of the coding decisions; outputting said representation from the compression coding step and passing the representation along a video pathway with the input video signal; and downstream of the video pathway compression encoding the input video signal in accordance with said coding decisions.

15. (New) Compression pre-processing apparatus, comprising coding means for analysing an input video signal and taking compression coding decisions including quantizer decisions; means for processing the coding decisions and means for outputting, from the compression pre-processing apparatus, the processed coding decisions for passage with the input video signal along a video pathway.

16. (New) A video signal process comprising the steps of: in a compression coding step, analyzing an input video signal and taking compression coding decisions; forming a representation of the coding decisions; modifying said input video signal such that said representation accompanies the input video signal; passing the input video signal with the accompanying representation along a video pathway; and downstream of the video pathway, compression encoding the input video signal in accordance with said coding decisions.

17. (New) A video signal process according to Claim 16, wherein said input video signal is modified to carry said representation in one or more of the least significant bits of the input video signal.

18. (New) A video signal process according to Claim 16, wherein said input video signal is modified to carry said representation in a data channel of the input video signal.

19. (New) A video signal process according to Claim 16, wherein said input video signal is modified to carry said representation in an audio channel of the input video signal.

20. (New) A method of distributing multiple compressed bitstreams from a common input video signal, comprising the steps of taking compression coding decisions in compression coding the input video signal; forming a representation of the coding decisions; storing both said representation and the uncompressed input video signal for distribution; providing said stored representation and uncompressed input video signal to a plurality of downstream compression encoders each associated with a decoder for decoding said representation and utilising said coding decisions in compression encoding the input video signal in each of the downstream compression encoders.

21. (New) A method according to Claim 20 wherein said compression coding decisions include quantizer decisions.

22. (New) A method according to Claim 21 wherein said compression coding decisions include quantizer decisions generated at multiple bit rates.

23. (New) A method according to Claim 20 wherein said representation and uncompressed input video signal are stored for distribution on a server.